

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz

March 20, 2009

Today I want to extend my very best wishes to all who are celebrating Nowruz around the world. This holiday is both an ancient ritual and a moment of renewal, and I hope that you enjoy this special time of year with friends and family.

In particular, I would like to speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nowruz is just one part of your great and celebrated culture. Over many centuries, your art, your music, literature, and innovation have made the world a better and more beautiful place.

Here in the United States, our own communities have been enhanced by the contributions of Iranian Americans. We know that you are a great civilization, and your accomplishments have earned the respect of the United States and the world.

For nearly three decades, relations between our nations have been strained. But at this holiday we are reminded of the common humanity that binds us together. Indeed, you will be celebrating your New Year in much the same way that we Americans mark our holidays, by gathering with friends and family, exchanging gifts and stories, and looking to the future with a renewed sense of hope.

Within these celebrations lies the promise of a new day, the promise of opportunity for our children, security for our families, progress for our communities, and peace between nations. Those are shared hopes; those are common dreams.

So in this season of new beginnings, I would like to speak clearly to Iran's leaders: We have serious differences that have grown over time. My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran, and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect.

You, too, have a choice. The United States wants the Islamic Republic of Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations. You have that right, but it comes with real responsibilities, and that place cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions that demonstrate the true greatness of the Iranian people and civilization. And the measure of that greatness is not the capacity to destroy, it is your demonstrated ability to build and create.

So on the occasion of your New Year, I want you, the people and leaders of Iran, to understand the future that we seek. It's a future with renewed exchanges among our people and greater opportunities for partnership and commerce. It's a future where the old divisions are overcome, where you and all of your neighbors and the wider world can live in greater security and greater peace.

I know that this won't be reached easily. There are those who insist that we be defined by our differences. But let us remember the words that were written by the poet Saadi so many years ago: "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence."

With the coming of a new season, we're reminded of this precious humanity that we all share. And we can once again call upon this spirit as we seek the promise of a new beginning.

Thank you, and *Eid-eh Shoma Mobarak*.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped on March 18 at 12:20 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Persian language transcript of these remarks.

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